



National Partnership
for Women & Families

August 13, 1999

The Honorable Charles Norwood
United States House of Representatives
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Norwood:

The National Partnership is pleased to endorse the Bipartisan Consensus Managed Care Improvement Act of 1999 (H.R. 2723). This is strong, bipartisan patient protection legislation, and thanks to your hard work, we believe it can -- and will -- pass the House of Representatives.

For women and families, few issues resonate as profoundly and pervasively as the need for quality health care. Survey after survey reveals Americans' growing dissatisfaction with the current health care system, and many feel the system is in crisis. We need common-sense patient protections that will restore consumer confidence and tip the balance back in favor of patients and the health care providers they rely on.

There are many features of this bill that are especially important. First and foremost, this bill ensures that medical judgments will be in the hands of medical experts, not insurance bureaucrats looking at the bottom line. This bill:

- Ensures that patients have recourse to a genuinely independent external review when care is denied.
- Allows patients to hold their managed care plan accountable when plan decisions to withhold or limit care result in injury or death.
- Ensures that women have direct access to ob-gyn services from the participating health care professional of their choice.
- Ensures that doctors and nurses can report quality problems without retaliation from HMOs, insurance companies, and hospitals.
- Ensures access to specialists, including, when appropriate, specialists outside a plan's network.
- Ensures access to clinical trials that may save people's lives.

The House of Representative faces an historic opportunity to provide patients the protections they need. We look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Judith L. Lichtman
President



Debra L. Ness
Executive Vice President



Joanne L. Husted
Director of Legal and
Public Policy